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GIORGIO VASARI

LIVES OF THE ARTISTS

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INTRODUCTION

The greatest rediscovery of the Renaissance was, undoubtedly, that man is the measure of all things, and the best, no, the only proper, study of man. Portraiture, rarely practiced during the Middle Ages, and biography, virtually dead after Plutarch, became favored pursuits, and it was an artist who was to combine both with distinction.

He was Giorgio Vasari, urbane, versatile, indefatigable, no leading spirit but one who followed the tastes of his patrons—neither an adventurer nor rake like his contemporary, Benvenuto Cellini, but an uxurious little man who, on his many business trips, sent his "cara consorte" passionate poems to tell her how he missed her presence.

No better person could have been found in Cinquecento Italy than this Signor Vasari for preparing what, all chattiness and inaccuracy notwithstanding, is the precursor of all modern biographical dictionaries and "*Who's Who's*" in the arts. Even as a boy, he was a model of assiduity: while the others were playing in the sunshine, he would perfect himself in drawing, and he could recite whole books of Virgil's *Aeneid* from memory. An incredibly rapid worker in everything he undertook, he lacked the real scholar's patience and thoroughness. But this born courtier knew everybody, and was able to elicit information and editorial help from many learned humanists.

One evening in 1546, quite a few of these men gathered at a supper party in the palace of Cardinal Farnese at Rome, Vasari among them. On this occasion, a noted collector, Bishop Paolo Giovio, outlined in detail his plan for writing a treatise on all distinguished artists. Pressed for an opinion, Vasari approved, "provided that Giovio were assisted by a painter or somebody who could put the facts into their proper order and explain the technicalities to him."

Thereupon the Cardinal asked Vasari, "Could you not . . . give him a summary and a classified list of all the artists, arranged in order, whereby you would also advance the artists?"

"Most Illustrious Cardinal, though I know that this task is too great for my poor powers, I promise to perform it as well as I am able," agreed Vasari.

Unlike many amateurs, the Bishop knew his limitations. When some time later, Vasari arrived with a sheaf of material, the collector persuaded the artist to complete the work himself as

he was clearly better equipped for it. Since Vasari was swamped with commissions and could write only in his leisure hours, it is remarkable that the handbook did appear only four years after the supper party. Issued in two volumes, it contained one hundred and thirty-three biographies, and was entitled, *Delle Vite de' più eccelenti pittori, scultori, ed architectori.* Eighteen years later, in 1568, a revised and enlarged three-volume edition was printed. This time, one hundred and sixty-one *Lives* included some contemporaries. The edition was adorned with woodcut portraits and, like the earlier one, it was dedicated to the "most illustrious and most excellent" Cosimo de' Medici, Grand Duke of Florence.

Today, scholars say "Vasari," to avoid the tediously long title of the book, just as they say "Gibbon" in reference to *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* Both works have been reissued repeatedly, both in complete and abridged versions, yet nine out of ten readers know nothing about the life of either of these authors, although both of them wrote fascinating autobiographies. Just as Gibbon achieved immortality as an historian, not as a captain of militia or member of parliament, so Vasari is known today through his literary work, not as an artist or architect.

He was born in the walled hill-town of Arezzo, Tuscany, in 1511, the son of a minor painter. As a youth, he had the good fortune to study under Luca Signorelli and Andrea del Sarto. He worked for the most distinguished patrons—popes, cardinals, and of course, the rulers of Florence—and received many commissions. Even his harshest critics do not deny his excellence as an architect: the best known among the buildings he designed is the Palazzo degli Uffizi, originally built for Grand Duke Cosimo to house the government offices and now a famous museum. There is less agreement on his merits as a painter. Nearly a half century ago, his biographer, Robert W. Carden, wrote: "Vasari's paintings are so inferior that it would be a waste of time to emphasize their demerits . . . . His literary legacy is of far greater value."

The second sentence is still true, but today we no longer consider the Mannerist style—exemplified by Pontormo, Rosso, and Parmigiano, and subsequently by Bronzino, Salviati and Vasari—a perversion of the art of the high Renaissance. In Vasari's frescoes, crowded with elongated figures whirling through operatic landscapes or architectural settings, one finds the restlessness and violent movement of an age of virtuosi, filled neither with awe for the transcendent, as in the Gothic period, nor with veneration for human dignity and man's self-sufficiency, as in

the earlier Renaissance. Vasari was interested in the broad effect rather than in delicacy or finish. Yet this decorator's intricate, almost feverish, way of painting helped to usher in the style of the Baroque! As a portraitist, he holds a rather high rank, particularly since some excellent portraits, once attributed to Bronzino or Pontormo, are now credited to him.

In any case, Vasari suffered from no "inferiority complex"; he saw himself as a worthy successor to Michelangelo and to Raphael. Although he worshipped his "divinissimo" Michelangelo, as nearly every chapter of the *Lives* attests, he reassured Duke Cosimo, on the very day of his idol's burial, about the future of the arts, promising to look to it personally: "I shall spare no pains to keep these noble arts alive and to advance them by means of my paintings, my writings, and by every other means within my powers."

When he wrote this, in 1564, the first edition of the *Lives* had long been sold out. In the preface to this edition, however, he had been most apologetic about his writing ability: "I neither expect nor delude myself with the hope of making a name for myself as a historian or writer of books . . . . My business in life is to paint, not to write . . . . I have written as a simple painter should write and in my own language."

He did not stray far from the truth when, in the dedication, he emphasized the labor that the work had cost him: "You will realize the diligence with which I have completed the work, robbing myself of my own leisure in order to do [the artists and architects] such honor as lay in my power."

As the years went by, however, he grew prouder and prouder of his work, even though adverse criticisms were not lacking. He was bold enough to write in the new preface: "It is rather a lucky thing for many of these painters that through the beneficence of the Almighty , . . . I have been spared long enough to rewrite nearly the whole of my book . . . ."

He felt entitled to include an autobiographical chapter which culminated in the statement that he had "worked hard . . . for the betterment of these most noble arts."

One may smile at this naive conceit, yet time has somewhat vindicated Vasari. In the last century, writers habitually stressed the most flagrant inaccuracies of his work, thus calling into question its truth as a whole. Today, we are more charitable. We no longer think of Vasari as a myth-maker or mystifier, but keep in mind under what difficulties he compiled his material in an age that was without reference libraries, and in which a trip

even from Florence to Venice demanded a major effort. Considering the disadvantages under which he worked, one is surprised that no more errors crept into his text than have been discovered so far. He made the best use of whatever documents were available, but he had to rely upon the oral tradition that had survived to his time. Credulously, he incorporated into his stories details which appear absurd to us, but were acceptable to a 16th-century man. Actually some of these details, once rejected as "fantastic," seen in the light of recently discovered documents, even appear to be true!

Vasari has been charged with having favored Tuscan artists at the expense of members of the other Italian schools, but what could be more natural? Unconsciously, even today, a French historian of art will stress the importance of the school of Paris, while a German will put his emphasis on Durer, or the *Expressionismus*. In addition, one should remember what Vasari has to say about the greatest of all the Venetian painters: "Titian, having adorned Venice, or rather Italy, and indeed other parts of the world, with the finest pictures, deserves to be loved and studied by artists, and in many things imitated, for he has done works worthy of infinite praise, which will last as long as illustrious men are remembered."

Although living in a period of artistic decline, Vasari stubbornly clung to the Renaissance idea of the steady progress of art, and proudly saw its culmination in his own era. Hence, the divisions of his book into three periods: infancy, youth, and manhood of the arts. Yet Vasari did not permit his admiration of skill and virtuosity to blind him to the great merits of the Primitives. One must remember that, not so long ago, Ducento or Trecento masters, and even Botticelli and his contemporaries, were held in low esteem in order to appreciate the homage paid by Vasari to such pathfinders as Cimabue and Giotto.

Among the masters of his own time, the only great one with whom he was on intimate terms was Michelangelo. It was no small compliment that the unworldly, unsociable master paid the utterly wordly younger man by showing him a paternal affection. Vasari described in a letter his visit to Michelangelo, then in his eighties:

"He did not expect me and showed as much feeling as a father who has recovered a lost son. He threw his arms around my neck and kissed me a thousand times, crying with pleasure."

That Vasari was not unaware of the good fortune that had thrown him into the path of a man like Michelangelo can be

gathered from the end of the chapter on the painter in the *Lives*:

"Certainly he was sent into the world to be an example to men of art, that they should learn from his life and from his works; and I, who have to thank God for felicity rare among men of our profession, count among my greatest blessings that I was born in the time when Michelangelo was alive, and was counted worthy to have him for my master, and to be treated by him as a familiar friend, as every one knows."

Yet he did not allow the very great ones, such as Da Vinci and Michelangelo, Raphael and Titian, completely to outshine the lesser stars. His pages include both the jester Buffalmacco (mentioned in the *Decameron*) and the psychotic Bandinelli. The lustiness of Fra Filippo is there, as is the weakness of Andrea del Sarto, and the eccentricity of Piero di Cosimo.

He loved to adorn his tales with memorable little episodes: the young shepherd Giotto's talent accidentally being discovered by Cimabue; Piero di Cosimo living entirely on hard-boiled eggs which, to spare fuel, he cooked when he boiled his varnishes; Paolo Uccello, when urged by his wife to come to bed at last, protesting, "Oh, what a sweet thing this perspective is!"; Filippo Lippi impressing his Moorish captors by his draftsmanship and thereby buying his way back to freedom. There are dozens of more, equally charming.

But he was not only a story-teller; he also had an eye for beauty, whether he described a Madonna in a church at Florence (attributing the picture to Cimabue, though it is probably the work of one of Giotto's followers) or Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* frescoes. Above all, he was bold enough to feel that modern civilization was itself worth writing about—not merely an echo of the glorious past. Hence the first edition began with Cimabue rather than, as was customary, with the ancients, and only for the second edition did he feel compelled to write an introduction that traced the origin of the arts of design from the Chaldeans, via Greece and Rome, to his own era.

Much as we admire his progressive spirit and the catholicity of his taste, what gives the *Lives* their immortality is the quality of great passion that can be felt in every line, the fact that, apart from its value as a source of information, it is, above all, a true work of literature. Perhaps it was a good thing that in Vasari's time there was none of the modern fear of inaccuracy. If this always busy, always impatient, man had been required to spend much time on the verification of facts, he might have told us only one-tenth of what we now have or, more probably,

he would have lent a deaf ear to the persuasive Paolo Giovio.

Vasari survived the second edition of his *Lives* by six years, dying in 1574 at the height of his fame. Soon after his death his reputation as a painter sharply declined, but the *Lives* continued to be appreciated. Several annotated scholarly editions appeared and were translated into French, German, and English. There are two complete translations of Vasari into English, one published in 1850, the other in 1912-1915. The version presented here first appeared in 1885; Miss Elizabeth L. Seeley, an Englishwoman, who, selecting what seemed to her the most important chapters, abridged and translated them, succeeding in retaining the novelistic charm of the original, its quaint archaism, as well as its sometimes didactic and even moralistic tone.

Very wisely Miss Seeley refrained from expunging material that was, beyond any doubt, in the realm of fable—for instance, the story that Castagno murdered Domenico Veneziano, it being a proven fact that Domenico outlived Castagno by several years. Vasari did not invent this calumny; he simply took it over from another writer. (The Florentines, on account of Castagno's brutal apostles and saints, believed the artist to have been a wicked man, capable of anything, including homicide.) All the amusing little stories are retained, too, among them the one about Uccello who had to paint the four elements, and with each, the appropriate animal. For air, there should have been a chameleon, but since Uccello had never seen one, instead he painted a camel.

Since both the abridged and unabridged editions of Vasari in English translation have been out of print for some years, the present edition fills a gap. Here we can go with Vasari to the churches of Florence and Assissi, Venice and Padua, and look at panels and frescoes, most of which, fortunately, have survived to this day, and watch, not only the great painters like Da Vinci and Michelangelo, but also lesser men, struggle with their medium to accomplish the best for God's lasting glory—and their own.

Yes, Vasari was a great artist in his clever distribution of light and shade, and dramatic application of contrasting colors. It is a pleasure to meet, not a genius perhaps, but a first-rate craftsman in intimate touch with all sides of artistic life, a man endowed with sharp eyes, humor and a good temper that rarely failed him. Let us delay no longer, but open ourselves to this man whom even so critical a contemporary of ours as Bernard Berenson could not help loving as "a great appreciator . . . and a passionate anecdote-monger."

ALFRED WERNER

CHAPTER I

CIMABUE AND GIOTTO

THE great flood of misfortunes, by which poor Italy had been afflicted and overwhelmed, had not only reduced to ruins all buildings of note throughout the land, but what was of far more importance, had caused an utter lack of the very artists themselves. At this time, when the supply seemed entirely exhausted, in the year 1240, by the will of God, there was born in the city of Florence, Giovanni, surnamed Cimabue, of the noble family of that name, who was to shed the first light on the art of painting. He, as he grew, being judged by his father and others to possess a fine acute intellect, was sent to S. Maria Novella to be instructed in letters by a relative of his who taught grammar to the novices of that convent. But instead of attending to his lessons, Cimabue spent all the day in painting on his books and papers, men, horses, houses, and such

CHAPTER XIV

LIONARDO DA VINCI

ANDREA DEL VERROCCHIO was in his time a goldsmith, sculptor, carver in wood, painter, and musician. For, having made a name for himself as a goldsmith, he was sent for to Rome, to work in the Pope's chapel, and perceiving the great esteem in which the ancient statues which had been found in Rome were held, he determined to apply himself to sculpture, and, entirely abandoning his goldsmith's trade, he set himself to cast some figures in bronze. These being much praised, he took courage and began to work in marble also. Just at that time the wife of Francesco Tornabuoni died, and the husband, who had loved her much, desired to set up a monument to her honour, and entrusted it to Andrea, who carved upon it the death of the lady and three figures of Virtues, which brought him much praise. So he returned to Florence with money, fame, and honour, and was employed to cast in bronze the ornaments for the tomb of Giovanni and Piero di Cosimo

de' Medici, and other works. But finding that he could not increase his fame in this art, being also a person to whom it was not enough to excel in one thing only, he turned his thoughts to painting, and made some sketches for pictures. He began to work upon them in colour, but from some cause they were left unfinished. There are many drawings by his hand, and among them some heads of women, with the hair arranged in that manner that Lionardo da Vinci always imitated.

The cupola of S. Maria del Fiore was now finished, and after much consultation it was resolved to make the ball of copper, to be placed on the top according to the directions left by Filippo Brunellesco. The work was entrusted to Andrea, and he made it four braccia high, and set it up, fixing it firmly so that the cross could be put upon it securely. The work was finished and set up with great feasting and rejoicing. It required great ingenuity and care, for it had to be made so that it could be entered from below, and strengthened with supports, lest the wind should do it injury.

Andrea was never at rest, but always working at something, though he often changed from one work to another, growing weary of the same thing. Though he never carried out the sketches for pictures which we mentioned before,

he did paint some pictures, and among them was one for the friars of Vallombrosa, of S. John baptizing Christ, in which Lionardo helped him, and which was the cause that Andrea resolved never to touch a brush again.

At this time the Venetians were desiring to pay honour to Bartolommeo Colleoni da Bergamo, who had won them many victories; and having heard of the fame of Andrea, they fetched him to Venice, and gave him command to make a bronze statue of the captain, to be set up on the Piazza of S. Giovanni and S. Paolo. He made therefore the model of a horse, and was preparing to cast it in bronze, when it was decided, at the wish of some of the nobles, that Vellano da Padova should make the figure of the general, and Andrea the horse only. As soon as Andrea heard this, he broke off the head and the legs of his model, and, without saying a word, returned to Florence in a rage. When the Signory heard of his departure, they sent a message to him that he had better not dare ever to return to Venice, or they would cut off his head, to which he replied in writing that he *would* take care, for if they cut off people's heads, it was not in their power to put them on again, while he could restore the head to the horse that he had broken off, or a finer one still. The reply did not displease the Signory,

and they made him return to Venice, doubling the money for his provision. So he mended his first model, and cast it in bronze; but he did not perfectly finish it, for being heated in casting it, he caught a chill, of which he died in a few days.

Among his many disciples the one he loved most was Lorenzo di Credi. He was the son of Andrea Sciarpelloni, and was apprenticed by his father to Master Credi the goldsmith, where before long he became so excellent in the work that to the great honour of Credi he was always called not Lorenzo Sciarpelloni, but Lorenzo di Credi. Afterwards he attached himself to Andrea Verrocchio, having Piero Perugino and Lionardo da Vinci for his companions; and because Lionardo's manner of painting pleased him greatly, he learnt to imitate him. Lorenzo was so much beloved by his master that when Andrea went to Venice he left Lorenzo in charge of all his business and his revenues, with all his drawings and statues and materials for work. And Lorenzo on his side was so attached to his master that, besides attending to his affairs in Florence with wonderful affection, he went more than once to Venice to see him and render him account of his management. This gave Andrea so much satisfaction that, if Lorenzo would have consented, he would have made him his heir.

When Andrea died Lorenzo went to Venice and brought his body back to Florence, giving up to the heirs everything that was Andrea's, except the statues and drawings and things of art.

But the greatest of all Andrea's pupils was Lionardo da Vinci, in whom, besides a beauty of person never sufficiently admired and a wonderful grace in all his actions, there was such a power of intellect that whatever he turned his mind to he made himself master of with ease.

Marvellous and divine, indeed, was Lionardo the son of Ser Piero da Vinci. In erudition and letters he would have distinguished himself, if he had not been variable and unstable. For he set himself to learn many things, and when he had begun them gave them up. In arithmetic, during the few months that he applied himself to it, he made such progress that he often perplexed his master by the doubts and difficulties that he propounded. He gave some time to the study of music, and learnt to play on the lute, improvising songs most divinely. But though he applied himself to such various subjects, he never laid aside drawing and modelling in relief, to which his fancy inclined him more than to anything else; which Ser Piero perceiving, he took some of his drawings

one day and carried them to Andrea del Verrocchio, with whom he was in close friendship, and prayed him to say whether he thought, if Lionardo gave himself up to drawing, he would succeed. Andrea was astounded at the great beginning Lionardo had made, and urged Ser Piero to make him apply himself to it. So he arranged with Lionardo that he was to go to Andrea's workshop, which Lionardo did very willingly, and set himself to practise every art in which design has a part. For he had such a marvellous mind that, besides being a good geometrician, he worked at modelling (making while a boy some laughing women's heads, and some heads of children which seem to have come from a master's hand), and also made many designs for architecture; and he was the first, while he was still quite young, to discuss the question of making a channel for the river Arno from Pisa to Florence. He made models of mills and presses, and machines to be worked by water, and designs for tunnelling through mountains, and levers and cranes for raising great weights, so that it seemed that his brain never ceased inventing; and many of these drawings are still scattered about. Among them was one drawn for some of the citizens then governing Florence, to show how it would be possible to lift up the church

of S. Giovanni, and put steps under it without throwing it down; and he supported his scheme with such strong reasons as made it appear possible, though as soon as he was gone every one felt in his mind how impossible it really was.

He delighted much in horses and also in all other animals, and often when passing by the places where they sold birds he would take them out of their cages, and paying the price that was asked for them, would let them fly away into the air, restoring to them their lost liberty.

While, as we have said, he was studying art under Andrea del Verrocchio, the latter was painting a picture of S. John baptizing Christ; Lionardo worked upon an angel who was holding the clothes, and although he was so young, he managed it so well that Lionardo's angel was better than Andrea's figures, which was the cause of Andrea's never touching colours again, being angry that a boy should know more than he.

There is a story that Ser Piero, being at his country house, was asked by one of the country people to get a round piece of wood, which he had cut from a fig-tree, painted for him in Florence, which he very willingly undertook to do, as the man was skilled in catching birds

and fishing, and was very serviceable to Ser Piero in these sports. So having it brought to Florence without telling Lionardo where it came from, he asked him to paint something upon it. Lionardo, finding it crooked and rough, straightened it by means of fire, and gave it to a turner that it might be made smooth and even. Then having prepared it for painting, he began to think what he could paint upon it that would frighten every one that saw it, having the effect of the head of Medusa. So he brought for this purpose to his room, which no one entered but himself, lizards, grasshoppers, serpents, butterflies, locusts, bats, and other strange animals of the kind, and from them all he produced a great animal so horrible and fearful that it seemed to poison the air with its fiery breath. This he represented coming out of some dark broken rocks, with venom issuing from its open jaws, fire from its eyes, and smoke from its nostrils, a monstrous and horrible thing indeed. And he suffered much in doing it, for the smell in the room of these dead animals was very bad, though Lionardo did not feel it from the love he bore to art. When the work was finished, Lionardo told his father that he could send for it when he liked. And Ser Piero going one morning to the room for it, when he knocked at the door, Lionardo opened it, and telling him

to wait a little, turned back into the room, placed the picture in the light, and arranged the window so as to darken the room a little, and then brought him in to see it. Ser Piero at the first sight started back, not perceiving that the creature that he saw was painted, and was turning to go, when Lionardo stopped him saying, "The work answers the purpose for which it was made. Take it then, for that was the effect I wanted to produce." The thing seemed marvellous to Ser Piero, and he praised greatly Lionardo's whimsical idea. And secretly buying from a merchant another circular piece of wood, painted with a heart pierced with a dart, he gave it to the countryman, who remained grateful to him as long as he lived. But Lionardo's Ser Piero sold to some merchants in Florence for a hundred ducats, and it soon came into the hands of the Duke of Milan, who bought it of them for three hundred ducats.

Lionardo was so pleased whenever he saw a strange head or beard or hair of unusual appearance that he would follow such a person a whole day, and so learn him by heart, that when he reached home he could draw him as if he were present. There are many of these heads to be seen, both of men and women, such as the head of Americo Vespucci, which is the head of an old man most beautifully drawn in chalk; and

also of Scaramuccia, captain of the gipsies. When Giovan Galeazzo, Duke of Milan, was dead, and Lodovico Sforza became duke in the year 1494, Lionardo was brought to Milan to play the lute before him, in which he greatly delighted. Lionardo brought an instrument which he had made himself, a new and strange thing made mostly of silver, in the form of a horse's head, that the tube might be larger and the sound more sonorous, by which he surpassed all the other musicians who were assembled there. Besides, he was the best improvisatore of his time. The duke, hearing his marvellous discourse, became enamoured of his talents to an incredible degree, and prayed him to paint an altar-piece of the Nativity, which he sent to the emperor.

He also painted in Milan for the friars of S. Domenic, at S. Maria delle Grazie, a Last Supper, a thing most beautiful and marvellous. He gave to the heads of the apostles great majesty and beauty, but left that of Christ imperfect, not thinking it possible to give that celestial divinity which is required for the representation of Christ. The work, finished after this sort, has always been held by the Milanese in the greatest veneration, and by strangers also, because Lionardo imagined, and has succeeded in expressing, the desire that has entered the minds

of the apostles to know who is betraying their Master. So in the face of each one may be seen love, fear, indignation, or grief at not being able to understand the meaning of Christ; and this excites no less astonishment than the obstinate hatred and treachery to be seen in Judas. Besides this, every lesser part of the work shows an incredible diligence; even in the table-cloth the weaver's work is imitated in a way that could not be better in the thing itself.

It is said that the prior of the place was very importunate in urging Lionardo to finish the work, it seeming strange to him to see Lionardo standing half a day lost in thought; and he would have liked him never to have put down his pencil, as if it were a work like digging the garden. And this not being enough, he complained to the duke, and was so hot about it that he was constrained to send for Lionardo and urge him to the work. Lionardo, knowing the prince to be acute and intelligent, was ready to discuss the matter with him, which he would not do with the prior. He reasoned about art, and showed him that men of genius may be working when they seem to be doing the least, working out inventions in their minds, and forming those perfect ideas which afterwards they express with their hands. He added that he still had two heads to do; that of Christ, which he would not

seek for in the world, and which he could not hope that his imagination would be able to conceive of such beauty and celestial grace as was fit for the incarnate divinity. Besides this, that of Judas was wanting, which he was considering, not thinking himself capable of imagining a form to express the face of him who after receiving so many benefits had a soul so evil that he was resolved to betray his Lord and the creator of the world; but this second he was looking for, and if he could find no better there was always the head of this importunate and foolish prior. This moved the duke marvellously to laughter, and he said he was a thousand times right. So the poor prior, quite confused, left off urging him and left him alone, and Lionardo finished Judas's head, which is a true portrait of treachery and cruelty. But that of Christ, as we have said, he left imperfect. The excellence of this picture, both in composition and incomparable finish of execution, made the King of France desire to carry it into his kingdom, and he tried every way to find architects who could bring it safely, not considering the expense, so much he desired to have it. But as it was painted on the wall his Majesty could not have his will, and it remained with the Milanese.

In the refectory, and while he was working at the Last Supper, he painted Lodovico with his

eldest son, Massimiliano, and on the other side the Duchess Beatrice with Francesco her other son, both afterwards Dukes of Milan. While he was employed upon this work he proposed to the duke that he should make a bronze equestrian statue of marvellous size to perpetuate the memory of the Duke (Francesco Sforza). He began it, but made the model of such a size that it could never be completed. There are some who say that Lionardo began it so large because he did not mean to finish it, as with many of his other things. But in truth his mind, being so surpassingly great, was often brought to a stand because it was too venturesome, and the cause of his leaving so many things imperfect was his search for excellence after excellence, and perfection after perfection. And those who saw the clay model that Lionardo made, said they had never seen anything more beautiful or more superb, and this was in existence until the French came to Milan with Louis, King of France, when they broke it to pieces. There was also a small model in wax, which is lost, which was considered perfect, and a book of the anatomy of the horse which he made in his studies. Afterwards with greater care he gave himself to the study of human anatomy, aided by, and in his turn aiding, that Messer Marc Antonio della Torre who was one of the first to shed light upon anatomy,

which up to that time had been lost in the shades of ignorance. In this he was much helped by Lionardo, who made a book with drawings in red chalk, outlined with a pen, of the bones and muscles which he had dissected with his own hand. There are also some writings of Lionardo written backward with the left hand, treating of painting and methods of drawing and colouring.

In his time the King of France came to Milan, and Lionardo was entreated to make something strange for his reception, upon which he constructed a lion, which advanced some steps and then opened his breast and showed it full of lilies. Having returned to Florence, he found that the Servite monks had entrusted Filippino with the work of painting an altar-piece; but when Filippino heard that Lionardo had said he should have liked such a piece of work, like the courteous man he was he left off working at it, and the friars brought Lionardo to their convent that he might paint it, providing both for himself and his household. For a long time, however, he did nothing, but at last he made a cartoon of our Lady with S. Anne and the infant Christ, which not only astonished all artists, but when it was finished, for two days his room was filled with men and women, young and old, going as to a solemn festival to see Lionardo's marvels.

This cartoon afterwards went to France. But he gave up the work for the friars, who recalled Filippino, but he was surprised by death before he could finish it.

Lionardo undertook to paint for Francesco del Giocondo a portrait of Mona Lisa his wife, but having spent four years upon it, left it unfinished. This work now belongs to King Francis of France, and whoever wishes to see how art can imitate nature may learn from this head. Mona Lisa being most beautiful, he used, while he was painting her, to have men to sing and play to her and buffoons to amuse her, to take away that look of melancholy which is so often seen in portraits; and in this of Lionardo's there is a peaceful smile more divine than human. By the excellence of the works of this most divine of artists his fame was grown so great that all who delighted in art, and in fact the whole city, desired to have some memorial of it. And the Gonfalonier and the chief citizens agreed that, the Great Hall of the Council having been rebuilt, Lionardo should be charged to paint some great work there. Therefore, accepting the work, Lionardo began a cartoon representing the story of Nicolò Piccinino, captain of the Duke Filippo of Milan, in which he drew a group of cavalry fighting for a standard, representing vividly the rage and fury both of the men and the horses,

two of which, with their fore feet entangled, are making war no less fiercely with their teeth than those who ride them. We cannot describe the variety of the soldiers' garments, with their crests and other ornaments, and the masterly power he showed in the forms of the horses, whose muscular strength and beauty of grace he knew better than any other man. It is said that for drawing this cartoon he erected an ingenious scaffolding that could be raised and lowered. And desiring to paint the wall in oil, he made a composition to cover the wall; but when he began to paint upon it, it proved so unsuccessful that he shortly abandoned it altogether.

There is a story that having gone to the bank for the sum which he was accustomed to receive from the Gonfalonier Piero Soderini every month, the cashier wanted to give him some packets of farthings, but he refused to take them, saying, "I am no farthing painter." As some accused him of having cheated Soderini in not finishing the picture, there arose murmurs against him, upon which Lionardo, by the help of his friends, collected the money and restored it to him, but Piero would not accept it.

When Leo was made Pope, Lionardo went to Rome with Duke Giuliano de' Medici, and knowing the Pope to be fond of philosophy, especially alchemy, he used to make little animals

of a wax paste, which as he walked along he would fill with wind by blowing into them, and so make them fly in the air, until the wind being exhausted, they dropped to the ground. The vinedresser of the Belvedere having found a very strange lizard, Lionardo made some wings of the scales of other lizards and fastened them on its back with a mixture of quicksilver, so that they trembled when it walked; and having made for it eyes, horns, and a beard, he tamed it and kept it in a box, but all his friends to whom he showed it used to run away from fear.

It is said that when the Pope entrusted him with some work for him he immediately began to distil oil for the varnish, upon which Pope Leo said, "Oh, this is a man to do nothing, for he thinks of the end before he begins his work."

There was great ill-feeling between him and Michael Angelo Buonarroti, on which account Michael Angelo left Florence. But when Lionardo heard this, he set out and went into France, where the king, having already some of his works, was well affectioned towards him, and desired that he should colour his cartoon of S. Anne; but he, according to his custom, kept him waiting a long time. At last, having become old, he lay ill for many months, and seeing himself near death, he set himself to study

the holy Christian religion, and though he could not stand, desired to leave his bed with the help of his friends and servants to receive the Holy Sacrament. Then the king, who used often and lovingly to visit him, came in, and he, raising himself respectfully to sit up in bed, spoke of his sickness, and how he had offended God and man by not working at his art as he ought. Then there came a paroxysm, a forerunner of death, and the king raised him and lifted his head to help him and lessen the pain, whereupon his spirit, knowing it could have no greater honour, passed away in the king's arms in the seventy-fifth year of his age.

The loss of Lionardo was mourned out of measure by all who had known him, for there was none who had done such honour to painting. The splendour of his great beauty could calm the saddest soul, and his words could move the most obdurate mind. His great strength could restrain the most violent fury, and he could bend an iron knocker or a horseshoe as if it were lead. He was liberal to his friends, rich and poor, if they had talent and worth; and indeed as Florence had the greatest of gifts in his birth, so she suffered an infinite loss in his death.

I think I have said that it was in the little town of Vinci in the Valdarno that Ser Piero

the father of the great Lionardo dwelt. To this Piero was born after Lionardo another son, Bartolommeo, who remained at Vinci, and when he was come to years of discretion, took to wife one of the first ladies of the town. Bartolommeo was very desirous of having a son, and he used often to tell his wife of the great genius of his brother Lionardo, and to pray God to make her worthy to bring forth another Lionardo, he being already dead. And when according to his desire a boy was born, he desired to name it Lionardo, but by the counsel of his relations he gave it the name of Piero after his father. At the age of three years it was a child of beautiful countenance and curling hair, with much grace in all its gestures and a wonderful quickness of mind. And there came to Vinci and lodged in the house of Bartolommeo an excellent astrologer named Giuliano del Carmine, and with him a priest skilled in palmistry, and they, looking at the head and hand of the child, predicted both of them alike that he would be a great genius, and in a very short time would make great progress in the arts, but that his life would be very short. And too true was their prophecy!

Piero, then, as he grew was taught his letters by his father, but without a master he set himself to draw and to make little figures of clay, so Bartolommeo trusted that his prayer had been

heard and his brother given back to him in his son. Therefore, taking him to Florence, he placed him first with Bandinello and afterwards with Il Tribolo. This master being then employed on some fountains at Castello, set Piero to work upon the figure of a boy, and he finished this so well that Il Tribolo prophesied he would show himself of rare skill. Taking courage by his success, he produced other works which astonished those who saw them. At this time few knew that he was the nephew of Lionardo da Vinci; but when his works had made him known, it was discovered of what family he came, and they left off calling him Piero and called him Il Vinci. Il Vinci, therefore, having heard much of Rome, felt a great desire to go there, not only to see the antiquities, but also Michael Angelo's works and Michael Angelo himself, then living in Rome. He went therefore with some of his friends, but having seen all that he desired, returned to Florence, considering wisely that the works there were too profound for him, and should be seen not by beginners, but by those who have greater knowledge of art. Nevertheless after more study he returned again to Rome, and spent there a year making many things worthy of memory, and for his friend Luca Martini he made a copy in wax of Michael Angelo's Moses. While he was there

Luca Martini was made by the Duke of Florence Proveditore of Pisa. And not forgetting his friend, he wrote to him that he had prepared a room for him and provided a piece of marble. Vinci therefore, moved by this invitation and the love he bore to Luca, left Rome and chose Pisa for his residence for some time. And the duke being then intent on benefiting and embellishing the city of Pisa, Il Vinci was employed by him.

Il Vinci's name and talents were now known and admired by all, and being still young, it appeared likely that he would equal any man in art, when the term prescribed by Heaven came to an end, and his rapid course was stopped. It happened that the Duke sent Luca Martini to Genoa on matters of importance, and he, loving Il Vinci and his company, and thinking it would be an amusement to him to see Genoa, took him with him. But almost immediately he was seized with a fever, and the distress was doubled by his friend being obliged to leave him and return to the Duke in Florence. He commended him to the care of Abate Nero; but Il Vinci, finding himself growing daily worse, sent for one of his pupils from Pisa, and with his aid was brought to Leghorn by water, and thence to Pisa in a litter. Arriving at Pisa one evening at twenty-two o'clock, worn out with

the hardships of the road and the sea and the fever, he could get no rest that night, and the next morning at break of day passed away to another life, not having reached the age of three and twenty.